

SELECTING WADERS



Waders divide themselves into a few basic categories: bootfoot or stockingfoot...neoprene or lightweight styles. Choose the one best suited to your activities.

THE BASICS:

- 1) Bootfoot waders are the most convenient
- 2) Stockingfoot styles with wading shoes give the best foot support
- 3) Felt soles are a must in rocky rivers
- 4) Look for integral suspenders or make sure a pair is otherwise included

BOOTFOOTS are chest waders with integral, molded boot feet. Their big advantage is that they are easier to put on and take off. A disadvantage is that the foot support is less than you find with stockingfoot styles worn with lace-up wading shoes. Bootfoots come with either cleated or felt soles.

Felt (or more commonly, woven polypropylene) soles are essential for rocky stream bottoms. The rough texture cuts through algae growing on the rocks and thus grips well. However, felt soles turn into skis on slippery, muddy banks.

Cleated soles, a hard molded tread pattern somewhat like a hiking boot, are best in mud or sand. They're great for wading small bass ponds or short trout-fishing outings, but are a poor choice when you expect to be making long riverside hikes or plan to spend 8 to 10 hours in them.

STOCKINGFOOTS have a waterproof stocking-style foot that require either special wading shoes or rubber boots. Supplementary over-socks are sometimes needed to prevent the wader foot from rubbing against the boot, minimizing the possibility of leaks.

NEOPRENE waders are ideal for winter fishing. They are made from the same material used in scuba divers' wetsuits: a thick, rubber-foam material that offers warmth and stretch. The seams are sealed for waterproofness, but even if a leak occurs, neoprene will keep you warm. You can choose from 3, 4 or 5 millimeter thicknesses. Threes are the lightest and most comfortable and offer moderate warmth. Fives are bulkier, less comfortable and substantially warmer.

LIGHTWEIGHT WADERS are preferred for summer fishing in most areas, since neoprene would be too hot. Options include lightweight urethane-coated nylon as well as thin, stretchy rubber. Since they fold compactly, they're great for traveling...but none of the lightweights have any insulating value.

SIZE: Fit is a big problem, but some makers now offer waders in short, regular, tall and husky sizing, as well as versions cut for women. If you are both tall and large, consider spending the extra money for a pair custom-made to your dimensions. A badly fitting pair of waders can be agony.

**Handy
Hints
with
Dennis Figg**

